

REMARKS

Reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested in view of the foregoing amendment and the following remarks.

By this amendment, claims 1, 3, 4 and 6-9 have been amended, claims 2 and 5 deleted, and new claims 14-16 added. Thus, claims 1, 3-4, and 6-16 are currently pending in this application and subject to examination.

In the Office Action mailed August 25, 2004, the Examiner objected to claims 2 and 9. The Examiner further rejected claims 1-4 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,118,745 to Hutchins et al. (Hutchins) in view of JP 06-325506 to Masatomo (Masatomo). Claim 6 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hutchins in view of Masatomo, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,754,138 to Turcotte et al. (Turcotte). Claims 11-13 have been allowed, and claims 5 and 7-10 have been indicated to contain allowable subject matter.

Regarding the objection to claims 2 and 9, the Applicants note that claim 2 has been canceled. In addition, claim 9 has been amended to correct matters of form, in accordance with the Examiner's suggestions. The amendment to claim 9 is merely cosmetic and does not affect the scope of the claims. In light of the amendments to the claims, withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

Regarding the rejection of claim 1, the Applicants note that claim 1 has been amended by this Response. In particular, claim 1 has been amended to include the limitations of claim 5 (including the limitations of claim 2 from which claim 5 depended), the subject matter of which the Examiner indicated to be allowable. In

light of the amendment to claim 1, the Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection of claim 1.

Claims 3-4 and 6-10 now depend on claim 1 and describe further features of the invention. As claim 1 is patentable over the art of record, so dependent claims 3-4 and 6-9 are patentable, and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 3-4 and 6-9 is respectfully requested.

Claims 11-13 have been allowed.

New claims 14-16 are independent claims corresponding to original claims 7-9, the subject matter of which the Examiner indicated to be allowable. Thus, new claims 14-16 are allowable.

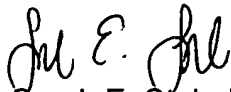
For all of the above reasons, it is respectfully submitted that the claims now pending patentability distinguish the present invention from the cited references. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding rejections and an issuance of a Notice of Allowance are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner determine that any further action is necessary to place this application into better form, the Examiner is encouraged to telephone the undersigned representative at the number listed below.

In the event this paper is not considered to be timely filed, the Applicant hereby petitions for an appropriate extension of time. The fee for this extension may be charged to our Deposit Account No. 01-2300. The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fee deficiency or credit any overpayment associated with this communication to Deposit Account No. 01-2300.

Respectfully submitted,

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